Apr 15, 2013, 4:04pm EDT

Maryland Port Administration shows interest in 171-acre Hawkins Point site

Officials still have sights set on Sparrows Point land for dredging material

Jones Lang LaSalle
The 171-acre Hawkins Point parcel of land outlined in white is up for sale

The **Maryland Port Administration** continues its effort to acquire land at Sparrows Point, but is exploring a 171-acre backup plan.

The Port Administration is looking at the former Cristal Global plant in Hawkins Point for a dredged material containment facility, Richard Scher, a spokesman for the port, said in an email. The site has been occupied by manufacturing operations since 1954. Crystal made titanium dioxide and titanium chemicals before closing its doors in August 2011.

The Cristal Global site straddles the border of Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County and represents a potential alternative if negotiations for Coke Point fall through.

The Port of Baltimore, meanwhile, has long coveted the 300-acre Coke Point peninsula in Baltimore County for a new dredged material containment facility. The Port Administration offered to buy the Coke Point peninsula in Sparrows Point from Environmental Liability Transfer Inc. in late February, but that offer was rejected.

The port would use Coke Point to store land dredged from the Patapsco River in order to deepen shipping channels. It plans to convert the land into a marine terminal within 15 to 20 years, Scher has said.

Negotiations are ongoing between the Maryland Port Administration and Environmental Liability Transfer, the owners of Coke Point, Scher said.

“We continue to meet and have productive discussions,” Scher said in an email. “We’re still identifying the footprint on Sparrows Point that makes the most sense for us to construct a state of the art marine terminal that will create a large number of new jobs.”

ELT, which acquired the Sparrows Point steel mill with Hilco SP LLC for $72 million in September, is interested in proposals for Coke Point that would reuse dredged material, according to sources. That would mean using the mud dredged from the channels for a commercial product for sale.

Randy Jostes, president of ELT, could not be reached for comment.

Another sticking point in the negotiations between the Port Administration and St. Louis-based ELT is the potential cleanup cost of Coke Point. The port estimates the environmental remediation of Coke Point totaling at least $15 million. That would include removing pollutants from the former manufacturing site.

The former Cristal Global plant would represent a potential backup plan to Coke Point. Hunt Valley-based Cristal USA completed a site assessment of its former manufacturing plant for the Port Administration after the MPA requested the information in January, according to sources.

Cristal USA Inc. is marketing the property for sale through the Baltimore office of commercial real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle. Todd C. Hughes, a senior vice president at the firm, declined to disclose the asking price of the property.

Hughes said multiple parties have inquired about the former industrial site.

“We can’t confirm or deny any group’s interest,” he said. “It’s available now and we haven’t set a timeline.”